Hartismere School



Whole School Attendance

Policy No 25

Policy led by : GLU Reviewed : November 2026 Next review : November 2027

Introduction

For a child to reach their full educational achievement potential, a high level of school attendance is essential. We will consistently work towards a goal of full attendance for all children. Every opportunity will be used to convey to pupils and their parents, or carers, the importance of regular and punctual attendance.

We maintain the school's high expectations with regard to attendance for all students at Hartismere Sixth Form College. The responsibilities of students, parents and carers to help their children to maintain excellent attendance remains the same.

School attendance is subject to various education laws and this school Attendance Policy is written to reflect these laws and the guidance produced by the Department for Education (DfE). The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to a full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude and any special educational need they may have. Where parents decide to have their child registered at school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly and on time.

The whole school community – students, parents and carers, teaching and support staff and school governors – have a responsibility for ensuring good school attendance and have important roles to play. The purpose of this policy is to clarify everyone's part in this.

This policy is based on current government and Local Authority guidance and statutory Regulations. The school will ensure that all members of the community have knowledge of the policy and have access to it.

The school will review its systems for improving attendance at regular intervals to ensure that it is achieving its set goals.

All staff (teaching and support) at Hartismere School have a key role to play in supporting and promoting excellent school attendance and will work to provide an environment in which all of our students are eager to learn, feel valued members of the school community and look forward to coming to school every day.

Members of the Leadership Team will coordinate the school's work in promoting regular and improved attendance and will ensure that the Attendance Policy is consistently applied throughout the school.

The school will also work with the Suffolk County Educational Welfare Officer (EWO) in striving to fulfil these aims.

Promoting attendance

The foundation for good attendance is a strong partnership between the school, parents and the child.

The Home/School Agreement contains details of how we work with parents as well as our expectations of what parents will need to do to ensure their child achieves good attendance.

We will ensure that our pupils are made aware of the importance of good attendance and how this will benefit them through our personal development program including tutor time activities and assemblies.

Parents and Carers' responsibilities

The prime responsibility for ensuring children receive an appropriate and full-time education rests with parents or carers (defined by the Education Act 1996 as those with parental responsibility and those who have the care of a child), who will be supported and encouraged by Hartismere School.

Parents will also be expected to:

- notify Hartismere School on every day of absence, using the dedicated phone number;
- ensure their children arrive at school on time, correctly dressed and with the correct equipment for the day, ready to learn;
- work in partnership with the school, for example by attending parents' meetings and consultations, supporting their children with homework and taking an interest in their children's education and activities;
- contact the school without delay if they are concerned about any aspects of their child's school life. Hartismere School will endeavour to support parents to address any concerns.
- not arrange holidays during school term time.

Intervention

The school recognises that early intervention can prevent poor attendance. We monitor attendance and punctuality throughout the year. We recognise that certain groups of students may be at greater risk of poor attendance, and we will provide support and assistance wherever possible. The school's attendance target is 98%.

It may become necessary for the pastoral team to become involved in a supportive capacity to promote improved attendance. If a student's attendance drops below 95%, the Educational Welfare Officer (EWO) may be informed.

Once referred to the EWO, the EWO will attempt to resolve the situation by agreement. If the situation cannot be resolved and attendance does not improve, the EWO has the power to issue sanctions, such as prosecutions.

Leave of absence in term time

At Hartismere School we class attendance of 98% or above as regularly attending school.

The school will consider any application for leave of absence and parents must apply in advance for permission for their child to have any such leave of absence. Any such leave of absence request shall not be granted unless it is clearly made under 'exceptional circumstances'. If a written request for a leave of absence is not completed and the leave is taken without a request being submitted, it will be marked as unauthorised. Retrospective requests will not be considered and will also result in the absence being categorised as unauthorised.

The need or desire for a holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure or recreation is not an exceptional circumstance, will not be authorised and can incur a penalty notice fine, in line with statutory guidance on school attendance.

School Procedures

Any child who is absent from school during the morning or afternoon registration period must have their absence recorded as being authorised, unauthorised or as an approved educational activity [attendance out of school]. Only the Headteachers, or a member of staff acting on their behalf, can authorise absence.

If there is no known reason for the absence at registration, then the absence will be recorded in the first instance as unauthorised.

The coding for any absences will be in accordance with the guidance provided by the Department of Education.

Registers

Morning and afternoon registers are taken by the Form Tutor using the online registration system. Cover teachers will also use the same system, unless they do not have access to the system, in which case a hard copy of the class register will be completed and given to the named member of staff.

Lateness

Morning registration will take place at the start of school at 8.55 am. The registers will remain open for 15 minutes. Any pupil arriving after this time will be marked as late or unauthorised absence, unless there is an acceptable explanation, i.e. school transport was delayed. In cases, for example, where the absence at registration was for attending an early morning medical appointment, the appropriate authorised absence code will be entered.

The afternoon registration will be at 1.50pm.

Pupils arriving after the start of school, but before the end of the registration period, will be coded as ‘late’ before registers close.

First Day Absence

All parents are expected to contact the school if their child is absent for any reason. A designated answerphone records all messages. These messages are accessed by a member of staff each morning. The parent of any child who does not arrive at school, and with no notification for absence, is contacted by phone. If there is no contact made by the parent, then a phone call will be made on the numbers supplied to the school. This information is recorded on the registers via SIMs (the school’s Management Information System).

If the school is unable to make contact, then a member of staff will continue to try to make contact that day using the other contact numbers available. If there is a safeguarding concern, the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) will be contacted and actions may include a home visit, Police involvement, MARF referral or social care involvement.

Ten session absence

In the case of any pupil who is absent without an explanation for 10 consecutive sessions, the Local Authority will be notified, by the school submitting a referral to the Children’s Services Attendance Staff for the local area Children Missing in Education team (CME). The school will include details of the action that they have taken. A Multi Agency referral form (MARF) may also be submitted to children’s services.

Absence Notes

Notes received from parents explaining absence are kept for the remainder of the academic year. However, if there are attendance concerns about the pupil that may require further investigation, then the notes will be retained for a longer period.

Frequent Absence

Within the school it is the responsibility of the year teams to be aware of and bring attention to concerns about attendance, in conjunction with the Student Support Manager. In cases where a pupil begins to develop a pattern of absences, the school will try to resolve the problem as soon as possible.

Meetings between the year teams and Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) take place regularly to look at individual patterns of pupil absence and discuss action to be taken.

Support for ongoing learning

Materials for home learning can be offered by the school if there is sufficient medical evidence, at a medical practitioner consultation level, that this is appropriate. These may include online resources through Google classrooms, platforms used by the school or other materials chosen by teachers.

In this instance, the year teams will collate all medical evidence and a support meeting will be conducted with parents or carers and the school.

Actions and timescales will be agreed and revised in a timely manner.

Persistent Absence [PA]

All pupils whose attendance level falls below the expected level, will be subject to intervention from the year teams to support their return to full attendance.

Support meetings may be put in place. Action plans will be set up by the year teams. The action plan will include engagement with all parties who can support the pupil's attendance.

If the attendance does not improve then a referral to the EWO can be made. Actions taken by the EWO may include Fast Track process.

Fast Track

The Fast Track model promotes early intervention by schools, the LA and parents or carers in cases of persistent absence. It aims to ensure appropriate and time-limited intervention is in place to tackle the underlying causes of poor or non-attendance as soon as it becomes apparent.

Where a student has an attendance rate below 95%, and some unauthorised absence, the school can make a referral to the EWO and a 'Fast Track' case may be opened. Please see Suffolk county website for details of this process.

National framework for penalty notices

There is now a single consistent national threshold for when a penalty notice must be considered by all schools in England, of 10 sessions (usually equivalent to 5 school days) of unauthorised absence within a rolling 10 school week period. The 10 sessions of absence do not have to be consecutive and can be made up of a combination of any type of unauthorised absence (G, O and/or U coded within the school's registers). The 10-school week period can span different terms, school years or education settings.

Sanctions may include issuing **each parent** (for each child) with a Penalty Notice for £160, reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days (for the first offence). A second Penalty Notice issued within a three-year period will result in a fine of £160 **per parent**, per child. If a third offence is committed the matter may be referred to the local authority for consideration of prosecution via the Magistrates Court. If prosecution is instigated for irregular school attendance, **each parent** may receive a fine of up to £2500 and/or up to 3 months in prison. If a parent is found guilty in court, they will receive a criminal conviction.

There is no entitlement in law for pupils to take time off during the term to go on holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure or recreation, or to take part in protest activity in school hours.

The Court has ruled that the definition of regular school attendance is "in accordance with the rules prescribed by the school."

In addition, if a family takes a third term-time holiday amounting to 10 or more sessions of unauthorised absence in a three year period and two fixed penalty notices have previously been issued in relation to term-time holiday absence and either

i) both paid or

ii) one or both withdrawn by the LA as no further action

The school will review. If it is decided that prosecution is the most appropriate course of action, then the matter will be escalated and will be referred to the local authority for consideration of prosecution via the Magistrates Court.

Record Preservation

We will ensure compliance with attendance regulations by keeping attendance records for at least 5 years. Computer registers are preserved as electronic back-ups.

Categorisation of Absence

Any pupil who is on roll but not present in the school must be recorded within one of these categories.

1. Unauthorised absence

This is for those pupils where no reason has been provided, or whose absence is deemed to be without valid reason.

- Parents keeping children from attending the school unnecessarily or without reason
- Truancy before or during the school day
- Absences which have not been properly explained
- Arrival at the school after the register has closed
- Day trips and holidays during term time which have not been agreed with the school
- Leaving the school site for no reason during the day

The school defines persistent absenteeism (PA) as missing 10% or more of schooling across the year for whatever reason.

2. Authorised absence

This is for those pupils who are away from school for a reason that is deemed to be valid under the Education Act 1996.

- An absence for sickness for which the school has granted leave
- Medical or dental appointments which unavoidably fall during the school day and for which the school has granted leave.
- Religious or cultural observances for which the school has granted leave
- An absence due to a family emergency

3. Approved Educational Activity

This covers types of supervised educational activity undertaken off-site but with the approval of the school.

Note: pupils recorded in this category are deemed to be present for attendance returns purposes.

This would include:

- Work experience placements
- Field trips and educational visits
- Sporting activities
- Link courses or approved education off-site

If a pupil is receiving education off-site, or is attending at a school where they are dual registered, the school will liaise with the other education provider to check on attendance.

Appointments

As far as possible, medical and dental appointments should be made outside of the school day. Where this is not possible, a note and appointment card should be sent to the school prior to the appointment. Wherever possible, a minimum of 24 hours' notice of the appointment should be given.

Students must attend the school before and after the appointment, wherever possible. If the appointment requires the student to leave during the day, an adult listed on the student's record must sign them out.

Should a student arrive late to the school following an appointment, they should report to the main reception.

The Registration System

The following national codes will be used to record attendance information.

Code	SIMS Description	DfE Description / Explanation
/	Present (AM)	Present for school morning session
\	Present (PM)	Present for school afternoon session
B	Attending any other Approved Education Activity	Attending any other approved educational activity
C	Other authorised circumstances	Leave absence for exceptional circumstance
C1	Leave of absence – regulated performance	Leave of absence for the purpose of participating in a regulated performance or undertaking regulated employment abroad.
C2	Leave of absence – Temporary part-time timetable	Leave of absence for a compulsory school age pupil subject to a part-time timetable
D	Dual registered	Dual registered to another school
E	Suspended or excluded without alternative provision	Suspended or permanently excluded and no alternative provision
G	Holiday not granted	Unauthorised absence – family holiday not agreed or days in excess of agreement
I	Illness	Illness (not medical or dental appointment)
J1	Leave of absence – Interview for employment or transfer to another educational institution	Leave of absence for the purpose of attending an interview for employment or for admission to another educational institution
K	Alternative provision provided by LA	Attending education provision arranged by the local authority
L	Late (before registers closed)	Late arrival before the register closed
M	Medical or dental appointment	Leave of absence for the purpose of attending a medical or dental appointment
N	No reason yet provided for absence	Reason absence not yet established
O	Absence in other or unknown circumstance	Absence in other or unknown circumstance
P	Participating in sports activity	Participating in sports activity
Q	Unable to attend – lack of access arrangements	Unable to attend the school because of lack of access arrangements
R	Religious observance	Religious observance

S	Study leave for public examination	Study leave for public examination
T	Traveling with parent for occupational purposes	Traveling with parent for occupational purposes
U	Late (after registers closed)	Late (after registers closed)
V	Attending an educational visit or trip	Attending an educational visit or trip
W	Attending work experience	Attending work experience
X	Not required to attend-non-compulsory school age pupil	Not required to attend-non-compulsory school age pupil
Y1	Unable to attend – Transport not available	Unable to attend due to transport normally provided not being provided
Y2	Unable to attend – widespread travel emergency	Unable to attend due to widespread disruption to travel
Y3	Unable to attend – unavoidable partial closure	Unable to attend due to part of the school premises being closed.
Y4	Unable to attend – unavoidable full closure	Unable to attend due to the whole schools' site being unexpectedly closed
Y5	Unable to attend – criminal justice detention	Unable to attend as pupil is in criminal justice detention
Y6	Unable to attend – Public Health Guidance / Law	Unable to attend in accordance with public health guidance or law
Y7	Unable to attend – Unavoidable other than Y1-Y6	Unable to attend because of any other unavoidable cause.
Z	Pupil not on roll	Prospective pupil not on admission requester
#	Planned whole school closure	Planned whole school closure

This is a list of codes where a reason will be required with the attendance code:

Code	SIMS Description	DfE Description / Explanation
B	Educated off-site (not Dual-Reg)	Attending any other approved educational facility.
K	Alternative provision provided by the LA	Attending education provision arranged by the local authority
Y7	Unable to attend – Unavoidable other than Y1-Y6	Unable to attend because of any other unavoidable cause.

Complaints

All complaints are dealt with under the Hartismere School Complaints Policy. Complaints should be made in writing and will follow the complaint procedures and set timescales. The handling of complaints may be delegated to an appropriate person. The outcome of the complaint will be communicated in writing.

Appendices

Appendix 1: The Law

The Education Act 1996 Part 1, Section 7 states:

The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him/ her to receive efficient full-time education suitable-

[a] To his/ her age, ability and aptitude and
[b] To any special needs he/she may have

either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

For educational purposes the term ‘parent’ is used to include those that have parental responsibility and/or those who have the day to day care of the child.

The legislation that pertains to children who are of compulsory school age and are registered at school is contained within this Act.

Part V1 Section 444 contains the details of when an offence is committed if a child fails to attend school.

Register and Admission Roll Keeping
The legal requirements are found in:
The Education [Pupil Registration] (England) Regulations 2006

Attendance Targets
The legal requirements are found in:
The Education (School Attendance Targets) (England) Regulations 2007

Guidance Documents on Attendance

The following DfE documents are used to guide attendance recording:

- The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026
- Working together to improve school attendance 2026
- Working together to safeguard children 2026
- Children missing in education 2025

These and other guidance documents are available on the DfE website.

Hartismere School attendance pathway

